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ABSTRACT

The State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia has requested that primary teachers be free from teaching one-fifth time for other professional duties. Several arguments in favor of this proposal for more "noncontact time" have been advanced. The argument that primary teachers should have noncontact time equivalent to that of teachers at other levels ignores differences in the nature of the job at each level. When Western Australian teachers are compared with primary teachers in other parts of Australia, they do not appear undersupplied with noncontact time. Although teachers must complete many activities besides those requiring student contact, it is uncertain whether these activities should occupy time made available by lengthening the school day or by improving teacher-pupil ratios. Although increasing noncontact time may improve teacher morale, there is no evidence that this would produce improvements in student achievement. Although the principle of noncontact time has been accepted by the state department of education, it is uncertain how much time is appropriate. In the absence of valid research data, decisions must be made using reasonable judgment and contemporary standards and practices. (Author/JM)

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NON-CONTACT TIME

FOR

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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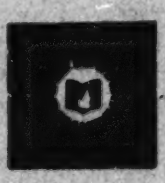

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

EA 011 084

NON-CONTACT TIME
FOR
PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Western Australia

July, 1977

FOREWORD

The matter of non-contact time for primary school teachers has been the subject of debate throughout all Australian education systems in recent months. While the topic has been one of considerable interest to teachers no clear statement of the issues involved has been available to support argument for or against its adoption.

This paper is not an expression of Education Department policy. It has been prepared by Mr P. Hill, an officer in the Research Branch, and, because of its clear exposition of the issues involved in non-contact time for primary school teachers, I have arranged for its distribution to all schools.

D. Mossenson

DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION

In line with the Teachers' Charter, as adopted by the 1971 Conference and amended at the 1972, 1973 and 1976 Conferences, the State School Teachers' Union of W.A. (Inc.) has of late been pressing for non-contact time for all primary teachers in Government schools. The relevant section of the Teachers' Charter reads:

> 1.3 (a) Primary Teachers
>
> A primary teacher shall be free from teaching 1/5th time, this time to be used for professional duties other than teaching. Teaching Principals and Teachers-in-Charge of Class IV Schools shall be free from teaching at least 1/3rd time to give additional time for administrative duties, this to be achieved by teachers receiving 1/10th time free in 1977 and 1/5th time free in 1978. Teaching Principals 1/3rd time free in 1977.

The extent to which State school teachers support these claims was recently revealed in a referendum conducted by the Teachers' Union amongst its members.[1]

Prior to the Union referendum, the Education Department had said that it rejected the Union's claim, though it accepted the principle of non-contact time. At the commencement of the 1977 school year, the Department deployed specialist teachers to introduce the principle into approximately one-third of all schools with primary classes, the amount of time resulting from the specialist teachers being two periods per week totalling forty to sixty minutes weekly depending on the age of children and other factors.[2] In accepting the principle of non-contact time, and in rejecting the Union claims, the Department stated that it was undecided over what would constitute an appropriate amount of time to be aimed for but that it would attempt to determine what this time allocation should be.[3]

The issue of "non-teaching time for primary school teachers", as it has been called, is one which has evoked considerable comment. In particular,

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[1] See "Teachers oppose stop-work", West Australian (28.4.1977).

[2] See The Educational Circular LXXIX, February 1977, Special Supplementary Issue, 1-8.

[3] See report of Deputation to the Minister, 2.12.1976, published in the Western Teacher, Vol.6, No.2, 1977, pp.21-22.

media coverage of the issue has been largely critical of Union proposals, with critics focusing on the apparently small number of official working hours of teachers and on the quite considerable cost to the taxpayer (in the order of $16 million) of implementing in full the Union's claim.[4] The Teachers' Union, on the other hand, sees the fundamental issue as: "it is educationally desirable that teachers should be able to give their whole attention to such duties as interviews with parents, testing, marking, recording and resource preparation".[5]

The Union's claim for non-contact time for primary teachers raises a number of important issues and implications. Any decisions will probably have to be made in the context of overall policies regarding staffing of schools, allocation of resources, school organization, the primary school curriculum, and general philosophic questions such as autonomy and decision-making processes within schools, accountability and community involvement. However, it is as well to begin by ignoring some of these implications and to concentrate on the question of the validity of the Union's claim.

It is, perhaps, rather unfortunate that the issue has often been labelled "non-teaching time" and even "time off" for primary teachers. These are both negative descriptions of what would seem to be implied in the Charter, suggestive of some sort of "perk"—a time when teachers could be "free" to do something other than what they are really being paid to do as teachers. It is perhaps more helpful to think of the issue in terms of "non-contact time", which has the more neutral connotation of time for professional duties other than direct classroom teaching.

There are, perhaps, three possible sources of evidence in the argument for non-contact time for primary teachers:

1. Comparability with other groups of teachers

   (a) in other levels within the system (i.e. pre-primary, secondary and tertiary).

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[4] See letter to the editor by Mr J. Berinson, West Australian (18.11.1976) and an editorial in the West Australian (1.12.1976).

[5] See editorial entitled "Correction", The Western Teacher, Vol.5, No.12, December 1976, page 3.

2. The nature of the job especially changed role expectations of primary teachers.

3. The effect on teacher performance and morale of granting non-contact time to primary teachers.

The arguments based on comparability with other levels within the system deserve careful attention, because they are frequently used in debating a wide range of issues relevant to teaching load and teacher working conditions. In the present context, the Union's claims for 1/5th time free for primary teachers in 1978 are to be seen in the light of current Departmental policy of giving teachers in secondary schools and pre-primary centres 1/5th non-contact time.

Those who argue for comparability between levels are claiming that, irrespective of the level taught, one should be entitled to the same conditions. For example, Selden[6] has the following comments to make on the differences between teachers operating at different levels of the system in schools and colleges in the United States:

> The standard instructional week for a college teacher is now 9 hours, and only a few, mostly in junior colleges, teach as many as 12 hours. This instructional time-load is justified by the concept that a college teacher is expected to engage in research, study, and preparation of materials for publication. The obvious corollary of this proposition is that elementary and secondary school teachers are not expected to carry on research, study, or thoughtful writing. Teachers are regarded as hourly workers and they are also hooked into an educational assembly line in a way which directly conflicts with the concept of "professional employment". The high workload of elementary and secondary school teachers prevents them from being truly professional. It lowers their status and accelerates teacher dropout.

In fact, Selden's argument makes little sense. There are very sound practical reasons why publicly funded research, study and preparation of materials for publication should be concentrated at the tertiary level. Such work is costly, often requiring the support of a full academic library, computing facilities, secretarial support and so on. It requires bringing

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[6] Selden, D. Teacher Workload and Teacher Dropout. QUEST Paper 5, Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Teachers, 1969, p.3.

together a number of people who are highly qualified both in terms of their field of study and in terms of the special aptitudes and abilities required for this type of work. Such specialization goes well beyond the demands of primary and secondary school teaching, or perhaps, more accurately, it is a different sort of specialization altogether.

Of course, many teachers do, in their own time, successfully engage in research, study and the preparation of materials for publication, usually in association with a tertiary institution. Normally, there are rewards within the teaching profession for such work, including accelerated promotional opportunities and respect and recognition from colleagues and superiors. But to suggest that all primary and secondary teachers should be expected to engage in this work as part of their normal duties is highly questionable. Apart from the fact that society could not afford to sustain such a massive influx of people into this type of work, it ignores the whole question of the inclinations or aptitudes of teachers to carry out such work with any degree of profit or success.

As for the argument that such activities are associated with being "truly professional", this is to be strongly challenged. Do we think a doctor in general practice any less professional for not engaging in research, study and the preparation of materials for publication than the specialist in a teaching and research hospital who does engage in these activities as part of his duties? There may well be differences in status, but <u>not</u> in terms of professionalism.

The counter argument to comparability between levels is that there are very real differences in the nature of the job at each level and that it is <u>not</u> valid to argue that teachers should expect the same conditions to apply irrespective of the level taught. Thus it would be argued that there are broad differences between children of different ages in terms of their physical, intellectual, social and emotional development of a kind that justify present level distinctions (pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary) and differences between the accompanying educational programmes at each level.

Looking now at arguments based on comparability with teachers in other systems at the same level, these are valid assuming that in all systems decisions relating to staffing formulae are made on rational, educational grounds and provided one also takes into consideration related variables such as staffing formulae, pupil-teacher ratios, class sizes, numbers of ancillary staff, the total amount of time children spend in school each week, the length of the work year, and provision of teacher facilities. In particular, it is legitimate to argue that conditions of work of teachers within the various State systems of education in Australia might be expected to be reasonably similar, in as much as equality of educational provision is a generally accepted political goal of Australian society at large.

Within Australia, information is at hand to allow such comparisons. In March 1976, the Australian Teachers' Federation co-ordinated a survey of conditions in schools[7] which collected statistical information on human and physical resources in Government primary and secondary schools in all States and Territories. The survey instrument was a questionnaire completed by teachers in the 14.3 per cent of schools in the stratified sample. A 93.1 per cent return was achieved. Although the survey has a few acknowledged weaknesses, the data it generated may be regarded as reasonably valid and reliable, and this applies especially to the data from Questions 3 and 4 of the questionnaire, which are directly relevant to the question of non-contact time for primary school teachers.

Questions 3 and 4 were as follows:

Q3 CLASSROOM TEACHERS (a) Number ☐☐☐

(b) Teaching Time 4/10 5/10 6/10 7/10 8/10 9/10 10/10

Q4 TEACHERS IN PROMOTION POSITIONS (a) Number ☐☐☐

(b) Teaching Time 1/10 2/10 3/10 4/10 5/10 6/10 7/10 8/10 9/10 10/10

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[7] Australian Teachers' Federation, Report of the National Survey of Conditions in Schools, 1976.

Respondents were asked to complete these questions in the following manner:

Q3 CLASSROOM TEACHERS

(a) State the number of teachers engaged solely in classroom teaching, expressed as fulltime equivalent, to one decimal place.

(b) What proportion of the school week is allocated as actual face-to-face teaching time for classroom teachers? Express the average for all classroom teachers on the staff, to the nearest tenth, by circling the appropriate fraction on the ANSWER SHEET.

Q4 TEACHERS IN PROMOTIONAL/ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

(a) State the number of teachers in promotion positions, including the principal, expressed as fulltime equivalents to one decimal place.

(b) What proportion of the school week is allocated to actual face-to-face teaching time for teachers in promotion positions? Express the average for all teachers in promotion positions on the staff, to the nearest tenth, by circling the appropriate fraction on the ANSWER SHEET.

Example - 2 subject seniors (6/10 teaching), and 1 deputy principal (4/10 teaching), and 1 principal (nil teaching):

Average = 4/10.

Selected results of these two questions have been abstracted from the Report and are presented in Tables 1 to 3. In interpreting the figures in these tables, it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that averages have been calculated from responses made on an eleven-point scale. Thus, these figures are unlikely to possess a high degree of accuracy.

TABLE 1: A.T.F. 1976 SURVEY OF CONDITIONS IN SCHOOLS: TEACHING LOAD OF PRIMARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Category	Proportion of School Day Allocated to Teaching†											AV.	S.D	Sample of Schools	
	.0	.1	.2	.3	.4	.5	.6	.7	.8	.9	1.0			N=	%
Australia, all areas								.7	1.7	26.4	71.2	.97	.05	672	11.7
Australia, inner urban *										73.0	27.0	.93	.04	18	16.7
Australia, small country **								2.4	2.5	22.2	72.9	.97	.06	135	10.6
New South Wales								2.1	.9	29.6	67.4	.96	.06	182	10.3
Victoria									2.4	33.1	64.4	.96	.05	153	8.8
Queensland								.1	3.7	12.2	84.0	.98	.05	133	11.5
South Australia								.3	.8	6.1	92.8	.99	.03	81	15.4
Western Australia									1.3	30.4	68.3	.97	.05	72	15.8
Tasmania					.2				.4	50.5	48.9	.95	.06	37	24.5
Northern Territory								6.7		41.2	52.1	.94	.08	26	44.8
A.C.T.										99.2	.8	.90	.01	8	15.4

* Five miles or less from G.P.O.

** Population less than 2,000.

† Figures in columns show percentage of teachers in each category.

TABLE 2: A.T.F. 1976 SURVEY OF CONDITIONS IN SCHOOLS: TEACHING LOAD OF PRIMARY TEACHERS IN PROMOTIONAL POSITIONS

Category	Proportion of School Day Allocated to Teaching†											AV	S.D.	Sample of Schools	
	.0	.1	.2	.3	.4	.5	.6	.7	.8	.9	1.0			N=	%
Australia, all areas	3.4	3.3	2.1	7.5	5.7	11.7	14.3	11.9	7.8	5.1	27.1	.66	.29	672	11.7
Australia, inner urban *			3.2	4.8		4.8	77.4	4.8			4.8	.59	.13	18	16.7
Australia, small country **	3.2	2.5	1.9	2.5	5.1	5.1	2.5	2.5	8.7	7.0	58.6	.81	.29	135	10.6
New South Wales		1.1			2.8	19.3	13.2	16.8	7.7	2.5	36.6	.76	.22	182	10.3
Victoria	1.8	1.2		2.4	3.5	6.2	11.6	21.8	15.6	8.0	28.0	.75	.23	153	8.8
Queensland	11.0	11.0	3.2	16.2	2.6	1.9	1.3	.6	1.9	7.7	42.5	.61	.40	133	11.5
South Australia	15.5	12.4	12.4	25.6	9.3	10.1	.8	.8	1.6	2.3	9.3	.34	.29	81	15.4
Western Australia	.8	1.5	1.5	19.8	17.6	16.8	15.3	2.3	4.6	9.9	9.9	.55	.25	72	15.8
Tasmania			3.0	4.5	18.2	7.6	18.2	7.6	12.1	3.0	25.8	.67	.25	37	24.5
Northern Territory			2.9	2.9		24.6	37.7	13.0	1.4		17.4	.64	19	26	44.8
A.C.T.							97.3				2.7	.61	.06	8	15.4

* Five miles or less from G.P.O.

** Population less than 2,000.

† Figures in columns show percentages of teachers in each category.

TABLE 3: A.T.F. 1976 SURVEY OF CONDITIONS IN SCHOOLS: TEACHING LOAD OF PRIMARY TEACHERS IN PROMOTIONAL POSITIONS IN 1-2 TEACHER SCHOOLS

Category	Proportion of School Day Allocated to Teaching†											AV.	S.D.	Sample of Schools	
	.0	.1	.2	.3	.4	.5	.6	.7	.8	.9	1.0			N=	%
Australia	.6						2.3	1.7	1.7	6.4	87.3	.97	.11	173	9.5
New South Wales										2.6	29.4	1.00	.02	39	8.1
Victoria							1.5	1.5	1.5	6.0	87.6	.98	.07	67	8.4
Queensland	3.6						7.1		3.6	3.6	82.1	.93	.21	28	9.2
South Australia							10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	60.0	.90	.14	10	10.1
Western Australia										40.0	60.0	.96	.05	10	10.2
Tasmania											100.0	1.00	0.00	10	100.0
Northern Territory								11.1			88.9	.97	.09	9	26.5

† Figures in columns show percentages of teachers in each category.

Analysis of Table 1 shows that in March of 1976, Western Australian primary classroom teachers were receiving, on average, three per cent non-contact time, a figure which was equal to the average for Australian schools as a whole. Figures for other States and Territories were New South Wales 4 per cent, Victoria 4 per cent, Queensland 2 per cent, South Australia 1 per cent, Tasmania 5 per cent, Northern Territory 6 per cent, and A.C.T. 10 per cent. Returning to the Western Australian figure, although the average percentage of face-to-face teaching time was 97 per cent, in fact nearly a third of all primary classroom teachers were getting 10 per cent non-contact time, which is what the Teachers' Union are claiming for all primary teachers in 1977.

From Table 2 it is evident that primary teachers in promotional positions in Western Australia were receiving, on average, 45 per cent non-contact time, which compared favourably with the Australian average of 34 per cent non-contact time. In fact the only system to give a better ratio was South Australia with 66 per cent non-contact time.

Table 3, which shows the teaching load of primary teachers in promotional positions in 1-2 teacher schools, is of interest in relation to the Teachers' Union claim for 1/3rd non-contact time for teachers-in-charge of Class IV schools. It shows that in Western Australia the figure was 4 per cent time compared to the Australian average of 3 per cent time. Figures for other States and Territories were New South Wales nil, Tasmania 2 per cent, Queensland 7 per cent, South Australia 10 per cent, Tasmania nil, and Northern Territory 3 per cent.

It was mentioned earlier that comparisons between systems at the same level are particularly valid if other factors relating to teaching load are taken into account. The A.T.F. Report found that in Western Australia, while physical resources had been comparatively well attended to, student-teacher ratios were slightly above average. In primary schools, class sizes were the highest in Australia (54.6 per cent over 30 students).

Putting all this data together, it can be seen that, as one might have expected, there are variations in practices between the various educational systems in Australia. Generally speaking, Western Australia is in line with the other States and Territories, which means that on the basis of comparability with other systems, a convincing argument does not exist for a dramatic increase in non-contact time for primary teachers in this State.

Looking briefly at practices in systems outside Australia, it is difficult to obtain an up-to-date and comprehensive picture of the amount of non-contact time primary teachers in other parts of the world receive. A few surveys have been located, though they are rather dated. Heck, et al.[8] analysed the results of 311 questionnaires returned by elementary school teachers in the Indiana area in 1965 and found that in answer to the question: "How many hours per week are you scheduled for preparation, conference, and/or free time?", 131 answered none, while the median for those that did was three hours, which works out to about 1/8 non-teaching time. This is to be contrasted with the results of an analysis of the use of teacher time in Virginia in 1966,[9] which established that the average number of minutes per day during which Virginian elementary teachers were free or unassigned was 9.4, which gives a figure of about 1/30 non-teaching time.

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8 Heck, et al. Utilization of Teaching Time, A Survey, Phi Delta Kappan, Bloomington, Indiana, 1965.

9 Virginia State Department of Education, An Analysis of the Use of Teacher Time in Virginia, Richmond, Va.: Virginia State Department of Education, Vol.49, No.6, December 1966.

In the United Kingdom a study into the working day of primary teachers carried out in 1969 by the N.F.E.R.[10] found that a wide variation existed in the allocation of free periods, but that on average, teachers in Surrey received one period averaging 27.5 minutes in every two days of teaching, which works out to about 1/21 non-teaching time.

Informal enquiries have been made among people acquainted with other systems in the United Kingdom and Canada and the overall impression gained is that in some systems primary teachers have some (typically two or three) periods of non-teaching time during the week, while in other systems they have none. Among those that do, sometimes it is a matter of official policy and sometimes it is an internal school affair arranged by the headmaster on the basis of available staff.

Turning now to justifications based on the nature of the job, especially changed role expectations of primary teachers, there are a number of complex issues to be sorted out here. Accepting that classroom time does not reflect the full extent of the classroom teacher's duties and that teachers are expected to work out of normal school hours, then the total work of the teacher can be described as taking place in four fairly distinct settings:

1. In school, during teaching sessions, in contact with a timetabled group of students.
2. In school, during teaching sessions, not in contact with a timetabled group of students.
3. In school, before and after teaching sessions.
4. Out of school.

The current claims for non-contact time are in fact claims for extra time for teachers to work in the second setting (i.e. in school, during teaching sessions, not in contact with a timetabled group of students). Thus, it makes sense to review the activities which have been cited in support of non-contact time for primary teachers and to establish whether these activities do indeed call for more time in this setting.

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[10] Hilsum, S. and Cane, B.S. The Teacher's Day, National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, 1971.

In its 1973 Charter, the Union specifically drew attention to three responsibilities to be carried out during free time:

> A primary teacher shall be free from teaching one-fifth time. This time to be used for parental interviews and for preparation and marking.

None of these seem to constitute a particularly valid case for non-contact time during teaching sessions. Preparation and marking have always been aspects of the teacher's work and, in view of significant reductions in class size in recent years, these cannot be said to have led to an increase in the teacher's load. As for time for parental interviews, while it is true that the value of parental contact has been stressed of late, it would seem unlikely that this warrants making available substantial amounts of non-contact time during teaching sessions for all primary teachers.

At its 1976 Conference, the Teachers' Union amended the relevant section of its Charter to read "...this time to be used for professional duties other than teaching". The Union's case on non-contact time for primary teachers[11] currently rests upon the need for teachers to be involved in

1. Curriculum and course planning.
2. Teacher development programmes.
3. Student and parent counselling and interviews.
4. Educational visits and small-group activities.

The notion of school-based curriculum development in which teachers work together to develop a curriculum suited to the needs of a particular school community has received much support in recent years. Such work is time-consuming and, unlike the normal lesson preparation traditionally carried out in the teacher's own time, requires that teachers are able to work together in developing and co-ordinating the various programmes. The need to consult with colleagues calls for in-school non-contact time, but rules out teaching session time, since it would be impossible, except in the large primary schools, to arrange for more than one or two teachers to be freed for such work at any given time.

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[11] "The Union's Case on Non-Contact Time for Primary Teachers", Western Teacher, Vol.6, No.2, 1977, p.4.

In the case of teacher development, such work may call for in-school, non-contact time to evaluate new ideas and new materials or to discuss professional matters with peers, but such time need not be during teaching sessions. In other cases, especially in teacher induction programmes where younger or less experienced teachers may wish to observe or be observed and assisted by experienced teachers, a need does exist for in-school non-contact time during teaching sessions.

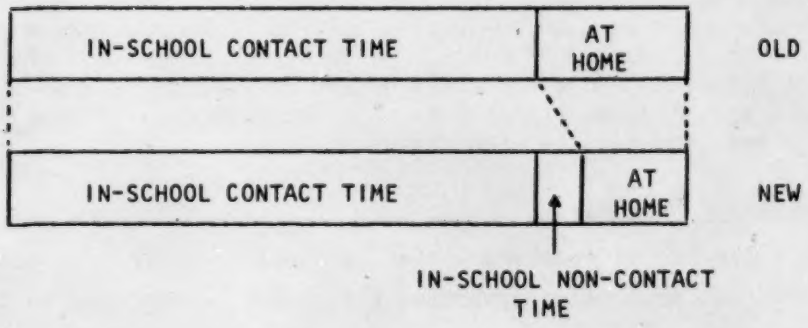
Student and parent counselling and interviews are valuable activities, but do not necessarily constitute a big demand on the teacher's time, nor do they always call for non-contact time during teaching sessions. In most schools the tradition has been to hold parents' evenings since it is often impossible for parents to come to the school during normal school hours.

Educational visits and other activities such as remedial work or individualized instruction with small groups of students, are recognized as having considerable value, although here the issue is not so much one of non-contact time, but rather of securing teacher-pupil ratios which allow for flexible utilization of staff in ways other than with a full class of students.

Taken collectively, the activities cited by the Teachers' Union in support of free time for primary teachers are more logically seen as a case for greater flexibility in the way in which teachers are deployed than as a case for free time during teaching sessions. Moreover, they raise a more fundamental question and that concerns the official length of school hours. As already indicated, the teacher's working day can be seen as taking place in four fairly distinct settings, but of these, two are entirely up to the discretion of the individual teacher. Although it is expected that all teachers will do work before and after teaching sessions, either in school or out of school, the system exerts little if any control over this time. It is this lack of accountability which undoubtedly worries many people outside and some inside the profession who suspect that a significant number of teachers do very little work outside official school hours.

Now it could be that certain of the roles of the teacher currently being promoted both by the Department and the Union, such as school-based curriculum development and teacher development, call for a redistribution of the teacher's day in such a manner that teachers do more of their work at school and less at home. Supposing we take the case of a teacher who currently has no in-school non-contact time and who does all of her work either in the classroom, during teaching sessions, or at home. We could represent the total work of this teacher as follows:

Now if it was felt that this teacher needed in-school non-contact time, then, by a redistribution of that teacher's day, this could be achieved by reducing the out-of-school component.



In other words, if the problem concerns a change in the nature of the teacher's work (as opposed to an increase in the amount of this work) then a solution might be to effect a redistribution of the teacher's day. On the other hand, if the problem concerns new roles and responsibilities being added to existing work levels of teachers, then a solution might well be to employ more teachers to allow a reduction in present work-loads.

Either way, the need for a close examination of the way in which teachers organise and utilize their time becomes apparent. In a short article reviewing the Houghton Report on U.K. teachers' salaries, Crotty[12] declares:

> 'The job cannot be compressed within a rigid structure of prescribed duties or days', said Houghton. Indeed it cannot. But all concerned with the management of education...need to consider the 'management of time' and to make decisions on what should be confined to the time the pupils are in school and what should be done during the rest of the year. Discussions on aims and objectives, on curriculum planning and teaching methods, on resource needs and distribution can surely be undertaken outside the traditional framework: likewise liaison with other social agencies and with 'feeder' or 'taker' schools and colleges. The preparation of syllabuses, of lesson plans need not be confined to 190 days although I do accept that refinements will be necessary in that time. And why cannot in-service training be undertaken at a time when the teachers are free to concentrate unreservedly on it and at a time when their absence from the classroom will not matter and will not disrupt the learning process simply because the children are not there?
>
> Very little systematic and objective work has been undertaken on the way in which a teacher spends his time in school. Contrast this with ...detailed research done on behalf of the medical profession both in hospitals and in general practice. If more were done, it could tell us much about the need to plan the use of time.

Do we know enough about the total work of teachers to know whether there is currently a problem of changing roles, of increased load, or both? To date no attempt has been made in Western Australia, or anywhere in Australia, for that matter, to obtain a systematic, objective description of the total work of primary teachers, though such a description must surely form the starting-point for any claims for non-contact time based on a consideration of the nature of the job. However, such studies have been carried out elsewhere, notably in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

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[12] Crotty, P. "How long is the teacher's year?", Education, 30 July 1976, Vol.148, No.5, p.108.

Of the studies reviewed to date, the most thorough in terms of research design and the most relevant in terms of its attention to the question of non-contact time for primary teachers, is the N.F.E.R. Research Project into The Teacher's Day.[13] The aim of this study was to obtain a systematic, objective description of the total work of teachers of junior-aged children through direct observation of teachers. The study used a randomly selected sample of 129 teachers in 66 schools, from within the county of Surrey. Teachers were observed on 197 working days during 1969. In addition, records were obtained of 75 weekends and 150 days of holidays. Assuming that the findings of the N.F.E.R. study, which investigated primary teachers teaching in Surrey in 1969, are relevant to the situation regarding primary teachers in Western Australia in 1977, then we may use the results of the study to throw light on the following issues relating to the question of non-contact time:

1. Media coverage has already demonstrated that the issue of "non-teaching time" can very quickly degenerate into an ill-informed, superficial industrial matter, with the attention of critics focusing on the small number of 'official' hours worked by teachers. Statements such as those in the West Australian that claims for primary teachers by the Union amount to a day off in five in a 27½ hour week[14] are usually not based on empirical data concerning the total work of teachers.
   The N.F.E.R. study provides such data for a sample of primary teachers. The findings seriously question the popular, uninformed image of the teacher as someone "who works from nine to three-thirty and has long holidays". During term time a five-day week averaged about 41 hours and if lunchtime work was included, this would become a 45-hour working week. There was then the weekend average of three and a quarter hours to add, and even when holidays were taken into account, it was found that the teacher worked on average a week of over 38 hours.

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[13] A full description of this study is contained in: Hilsum, S. and Cane, B.S. The Teacher's Day, National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, 1971. In addition, a condensed version has been published: Hilsum, S. The Teacher at Work, National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, 1972.

[14] See letter to the editor by Mr J. Berinson, West Australian (18.11.1976).

Do Western Australian primary teachers put in similar hours of work? The fact is we do not know, but there would seem to be no particular reason why the figures should be radically different.

2. A related argument concerns the length of the school day. It has been suggested that in systems where the total length of the official school day is relatively short, teachers could not expect to be granted non-contact time during teaching sessions. The implication would seem to be that these teachers already do less work than those with longer school hours.
   The N.F.E.R. study, on the other hand, found that those teachers who had longer school hours did less evening work than those with shorter school hours, while teachers who had short school hours appeared to compensate for this by achieving a <u>total</u> working commitment that was <u>greater</u> than that of teachers who worked in schools with relatively long hours.

   These results argues for caution in relating the issue of non-contact time to the length of school hours.

3. Perhaps because scheduled non-contact time for teachers is often referred to as "free periods" or "time off", a number of critics seem to imply that such periods represent some sort of "perk"—a time when teachers are able to do something other than what they are really being paid to do as teachers.
   The N.F.E.R. study revealed that teachers spend an average of less than 7 per cent of total free period time on private matters such as relaxing, reading a newspaper, or chatting. In addition it also found that on average only 24 per cent of the total lunch and break time could be classified as "private" and that 76 per cent of this time was devoted to various job-related tasks.

4. Related to the above is the common misconception of the primary teacher as someone who is constantly engaged in giving instruction. Too often a very restricted concept of the teacher's role is entertained and the mult'-faceted nature of the job is not appreciated.

The N.F.E.R. study revealed that nearly half of the teacher's total work took place away from the classroom. Actual instruction took up only a quarter of the teacher's time, while the essential related professional work - organizing, lesson planning, marking and staff consultation - appropriated another 40 per cent of the day.

These facts are useful in the context of the commonly heard declaration that "a teacher's place is in the classroom, teaching".

5. Turning to the content of free periods, the N.F.E.R. study found that teachers perform a wide range of tasks during free periods. To quote from the text of the study:

> An analysis of free periods revealed...that very few free periods observed were devoted entirely or even primarily to a single activity: during most free periods the teacher undertook four or five different activities. Thus the notion of labelling these periods 'personal' or 'marking', or 'preparing', etc. is not supported by actual practice.[15]

This suggests that it might be unwise for either the Union or the Department to specify what should take place during non-contact time, other than to specify that it be devoted to professional or job-related tasks. On the other hand, it would seem very sensible to suggest as priorities those tasks which are either essentially or highly desirable responsibilities which can only be properly carried out in schools. An alternative might be to regard the question of specifying what should take place during non-contact time as a school-level decision.

6. A point worth mentioning is that although the notion of a free period may generally summon up a picture of a teacher being in the staff room, away from contact with pupils, the N.F.E.R. study revealed that a large part of many free periods is spent moving around the school building, with interaction with pupils taking place fairly often.

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[15] Hilsum and Cane, op.cit., p.172.

7. The issue of scheduled non-contact time for primary teachers is often linked to the issue of teaching aides in schools. The N.F.E.R. study revealed that a quarter of the teacher's time was taken up by mechanical, clerical and supervising tasks. The report recommended that teacher aides might be used to make better use of the teacher's professional time. However, it also noted that much routine work carried out by teachers was inextricably linked to their other tasks and therefore could not easily be separated out and assigned to aides.

A systematic, objective study of the work of primary teachers clearly provides much valuable information relevant to making decisions about non-contact time for primary teachers. It is unfortunate that such data does not exist for Western Australia, for though we can infer that similarities will exist between here and other systems overseas, we can never be at all confident or certain.

To conclude the discussion on justifications for increased non-contact time for primary teachers based on a consideration of the nature of the job, there would seem to be little doubt that a reasonable case can be made for time off from classroom teaching, but it is almost impossible to obtain data which would allow one to calculate just how much time this should be or to judge whether such redistribution of the teacher's day should be achieved by increasing the length of the teacher's school day or by improving teacher-pupil ratios.

Of course, investigations such as the N.F.E.R. study inevitably highlight quantitative as opposed to qualitative aspects of the teacher's work. The latter are hard to measure, especially when they touch upon sensitive areas of concern. For example, an argument in favour of non-teaching time for primary teachers, and one which has not been openly acknowledged by the Teacher's Union, though possibly at the heart of teacher support for Union claims, concerns the question of teacher performance and morale.

Hanson[16] has asked whether "teaching might not be more rewarding and intrinsically satisfying, as well as more effective, if teachers had to do rather less of it". He points out that "Promotion not only leads to higher financial rewards, status and responsibility, but to less actual teaching" and continues:

> The benefits accruing from the latter may be as significant as from the former. How time and energy are allocated is radically changed when the teacher is no longer committed to being in front of a class for the whole school day.
>
> The introduction of more ancillary staff, more technicians, programmed instruction and AVA's, and team teaching are said to lead to a reduction in routine tasks and will liberate the teacher from the monotony of administration and repetition of work in order to make further use of his professional skills by greater involvement with children. Such heady talk may stir the enthusiasm of the gifted and the committed, but may not even penetrate to the rest, for whom some routine is a welcome change from the strains of Nuffield Junior Science, modern mathematics and creative expression.
>
> There is no shortage of applicants for jobs which include less teaching and more monotony and tedium of administration. Is it just that the extra pay is the attraction? Could it not be that promotion offers an escape from the sources of greatest tension?

Hanson is suggesting that teachers as a group are very reluctant to openly face up to the fact that, as Frank Musgrove puts it, "the teacher lives constantly in crisis", and that for most teachers, long periods of unbroken class contact are a major cause of strain and tension. To have to admit as a teacher that one would prefer to see rather less of one's pupils seems to be tantamount to an admission of inadequacy or lack of commitment.

While there is every indication that teachers would be enthusiastic about time off from classroom teaching as a means of relieving strain and tension, there is no empirical support for the claim that it would also improve teacher performance. After reviewing research on the topic, Murphy[17] concludes:

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16 Hanson, D. "The strain of front line service", Time Educational Supplement, n.2954, 31.12.1971, p.4.

17 Murphy, W.F. op.cit., p.52.

> The determination of suitable teacher load for any subject or any grade level would appear to be a somewhat arbitrary decision in the absence of any valid or reliable research data to sustain specific criteria. Reasonable judgement in the light of contemporary standards and the guidelines in current practice may be the best and the only sources of guidance.

At this stage it is perhaps appropriate to summarize the above discussion of non-contact time for primary teachers. In terms of comparability with other groups of teachers, the case for comparability with other levels within the system (i.e. pre-primary, secondary and tertiary) is largely invalid as it ignores real differences in the nature of the job at each level. The case for comparability with primary teachers in other systems within Australia has greater validity. Here it was noted that current policies and practices concerning non-contact time for primary teachers in Western Australia do not differ markedly from those in other systems and certainly no Australian precedent exists for 1/5 non-contact time.

With regard to justifications based on a consideration of the nature of the job, especially changed role expectations of primary teachers, there are a number of activities that primary teachers are currently expected to engage in which call for in-school non-contact time. However, there are problems in deciding whether this redistribution of the teacher's day should be achieved by increasing the length of the teacher's school day or by improving teacher-pupil ratios. Finally, there is the claim that increased non-contact time would have a positive effect on teacher morale and would be welcomed by teachers as a means of relieving strain and tension generated by long periods of unbroken class contact. While this may be the case, it must be recognized that there is no empirical evidence that increasing non-contact time also leads to significant improvements in pupil outcomes.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the principle of non-contact time has been accepted by the Education Department, but it is undecided as to what should constitute an appropriate amount of time. The above analysis supports Murphy's view that the determination of non-contact time, as with other aspects of teacher load, is necessarily an arbitrary decision in the absence of valid and reliable research data and that reasonable judgement in the light of contemporary standards and current practices may be the best and only source of guidance.

So far, this discussion has ignored the many related issues and implications of non-contact time, which is, in reality, only one aspect of the issue of working conditions and teacher load and but a tiny part of the whole question of deployment of resources. In the past, Departmental policies in all parts of Australia tended towards highly centralized control and uniformity of provision. More recently the trend has been towards decentralization, increased school autonomy and greater flexibility for schools and teachers in the way in which resources are deployed and in the type of educational programmes followed. This trend stems from a recognition of diversity in the needs and aspirations of different communities.

If non-contact time is viewed as one of the many variables which can be manipulated to achieve a total balance in accord with the goals of a particular school, then acceptance of the principle of a fixed proportion of non-contact time for all teachers many well be a retrogressive step. It may not be feasible or appropriate that all primary classroom teachers get exactly the same amount of non-contact time or that all primary class sizes should be the same. Perhaps in a particular situation it might be desirable that a teacher accepts a large class and a correspondingly generous allocation of non-contact time, while in another situation a teacher might accept a small class and fewer non-contact periods.

In one school it might be felt that each teacher's non-contact time be specifically devoted to one or more of the following activities: (1) small-group instruction, (2) curriculum development, (3) individualizing instruction, (4) remedial teaching, (5) co-operative team teaching, (6) resource centre activities, (7) teacher induction, (8) excursions.[18] In another school, the staff might feel that rather than use financial resources to deploy extra teachers to achieve a uniform level of non-contact time, they would rather use these resources to provide extra equipment or facilities, or to employ support personnel other than teachers.

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[18] See The Education Circular, Vol.LXXIX, February 1977, p.3.

Of course, if such alternative arrangements were ever made available to schools, certain safeguards would have to be built into administrative arrangements to ensure that individual teachers were not obliged to accept a much heavier work load than colleagues in other schools. Perhaps a teaching load formula for assessing the relative work load of each teacher, taking into account such variables as total length of teaching sessions, class size, number of grades present in each class, and special characteristics of the class and of the school, might be devised and employed as a check upon equable distribution of work load.

Going one step beyond the development of a method of objectively assessing the teaching load of individual teachers, a further possibility for the Education Department to consider is the drawing up of a fairly detailed specification of teacher responsibilities and teaching conditions based upon reliable research data concerning the total work (both actual and expected) of the primary school teacher. Such a specification could then form a basis for negotiation with the Teachers' Union.

To return to the issue of non-contact time, it is suggested that this issue is much more complicated than a simple question of "How much?". Like any other aspect of teacher load and working conditions, non-contact time is inextricably related to many other issues concerning the ways in which resources are employed within schools and in particular, how teachers plan their use of time. If anything, the recent history of events surrounding the question of non-contact time for primary teachers highlights the need for a holistic, systematic approach to decision-making and Teachers' Union-Education Department negotiations.

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